

TOWN OF ESSEX ZONING COMMISSION

29 WEST AVENUE – ESSEX, CT 06426

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – May 7, 2018

PUBLIC HEARING

Present: Larry Shipman, Chairman
Russ Smith, Vice-Chairman
Bill Reichenbach, Secretary
Jim Hill, Regular Member
Jeffrey Lovelace, Alternate Member
Robert Day, Alternate Member
Thomas Carroll, Alternate Member

Absent: Susan Uihlein, Regular Member

Also present: Joe Budrow, Zoning Enforcement Official

CALL TO ORDER: Larry Shipman, Chairman called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 PM. Seated for the public hearing were Regular Members Larry Shipman, Russ Smith, Bill Reichenbach and Jim Hill. Alternate Rob Day was seated for Susan Uihlein. Alternate Members Jeffrey Lovelace and Thomas Carroll were also in attendance.

Application 18-10 – Jane and Keith Bolles – An application to allow an accessory apartment within a house at 8 Squires Lane.

Mr. Reichenbach entered the legal notice into the record.

Mr. Reichenbach entered a letter from the Essex Health Department into the record. They have no objection with this application.

The applicant, Jane Bolles, stated that an in-law apartment was built above the garage in 1990. Shortly after that a kitchenette was added. She is now in the process of trying to sell her house but a permit is needed for this accessory apartment in order for her to do so.

Mr. Budrow said that the plans are conforming and he feels that this application is ready to close.

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

MOTION made by Russ Smith to close this application. Bill Reichenbach seconded the motion. All in favor, **Motion carried, 5-0.**

Application 18-9 – HOPE Partnership, Inc. – An application for a Site Plan review to locate a 17-unit multi-family dwelling development, known as “The Lofts at Spencer’s Corner”, at 90 Main Street, Centerbrook.

There was no correspondence for submission.

Attorney Ed Cassella from Cloutier & Cassella represented for the client. He submitted plans to the Commission. He also gave an overview of what HOPE Partnership does and what some of their other projects in the area have been. HOPE Partnership is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

HOPE Partnership wants to convert the second and third floors of Spencer’s Corner into 17 affordable housing units consisting of one and two bedroom units with one three bedroom unit.

Attorney Cassella said that the Spencer’s Corner Association approached HOPE Partnership over two years ago to see if they had an interest in doing this project.

Attorney Cassella provided an updated affordability plan to the Commission.

This project needs approval from the Zoning Commission for multi-family use in this district, and also need approval from the Association at Spencer’s Corner for a residential use inside a commercial building.

All 17 units are to be considered affordable. Depending on the funding to be offered, 9 units will be considered affordable for people who make 80% of the state median income and 8 units will be considered affordable for people who make 60% of the state median income.

Attorney Cassella thinks that Section 8-30(g) of the zoning regulations is what needs to be followed for this application.

Greg Nucci from Point One Architects also presented on behalf of the client. He gave an overview of what is being proposed and the plans that Point One has prepared. Most of their plan is already in place from the pre-existing configurations at the complex. The current parking configuration will remain the same except there will be specific spaces reserved for residential use. 145 parking spaces are required and there are 140 existing spaces. There will be 2 handicapped spaces in front of the building. All second floor units will be handicap accessible by elevator. The dumpster will remain in the existing trash area in which Mr. Nucci is looking to relocate to a different corner.

Mr. Nucci said that the second floor will have the 17 residential units with a mix of two and three bedrooms. The third floor will hold bedrooms above the second-floor unit. The third floor does not have its own hallways and exits; therefore, the second-floor unit is attached.

The structure will remain the same but reroofing and residing will be done to upper areas that need work. New energy star windows are to be installed on the second and third floors as well as new installation. (This will also help with getting state funding). Juliette balconies will be added to give the appearance of being a residential unit. (The balconies extend to approximately 8

inches off the building).

Natural gas furnaces will be used, all with separate meters. This will include air conditioning as well. There will be an elevator on the second floor for handicap accessibility. There are four septic sites on the property right now for each building. HOPE's engineer is currently working with the town Health Sanitarian on the septic- a few larger tanks may need to be added.

The Commission asked questions:

Mr. Shipman asked if the parking calculation includes the parking spaces in reserve. Mr. Nucci responded that no, it does not.

Mr. Lovelace asked where the staircases are located. Mr. Nucci demonstrated on their property map and stated that the main entrance to the building will be through building two which will hold access to all the units.

Mr. Hill asked about how many of each type of units. Mr. Nucci said that they are planning on having 7 one-bedroom units, 9 two-bedroom units and 1 three-bedroom unit which is a third-floor stand-alone unit. A zoning plan has been provided to the Commission which demonstrates the breakdown and square footage of the bedrooms. Mr. Hill asked who makes these decisions on the unit sizes. Mr. Nucci said that he has a code official that he consults.

Mr. Day asked if the one bedroom units have a space upstairs. Mr. Nucci said no.

Mr. Nucci mentioned that the architects are working with mechanical engineers and construction engineers at the present time.

Lauren Ashe, Executive Director of The HOPE Partnership presented. She gave an overview of how this project initially began. She then explained what the need is for affordable housing in this area. The area median household income for a family state wide is \$98,600. Essex is \$106,000. Therefore, the demographic of people they are looking for make around \$85,000 a year down to \$40,000 or \$50,000, dependent on their family size.

Mr. Smith asked who would take care of the day to day operations. Ms. Ashe said that HOPE Partnership will own the units but will have property managers to handle everything.

Attorney Cassella said that they currently have 15 condo units that are being required to be made into 17 affordable units.

Ms. Ashe said that they hope to start with the actual renovation within the next 12 to 18 months once all applications and funding have been approved.

Mr. Reichenbach asked about the current tenants. Attorney Cassella and Ms. Ashe said that by the time they are ready to start the renovations, many leases will have already expired or they will move the tenant to another spot within the complex. Ms. Ashe said that HOPE Partnership fully intends to work with the current tenants to find a suitable

arrangement for them.

Mr. Shipman asked a question about a special permit use. Attorney Cassella answered him. He then explained what section 8-30(g) is and what rules would apply for this type of application. The Zoning Commission cannot deny an application that's part of section 8-30(g) unless there's a significant health or safety concern.

Mr. Lovelace asked if there will be a recreational area for the kids. Ms. Ashe mentioned that the Essex Elementary School playground is located next door, therefore they do not intend to have a separate recreational area at Spencer's Corner.

The audience asked questions and made comments:

Joanne Wallace, a neighbor on 28 Westbrook Road in Centerbrook spoke to the Commission. She has concerns on the setbacks and the storm water runoff. Attorney Cassella is to do some further research in order to address her concerns.

Ruth Morrison, town resident spoke. She asked a question about section 8-30(g) of the zoning regulations for affordable housing and what rights we have as a town. She also asked how much the minimum occupancy per unit is. She asked what the safety procedure will be for ensuring that there is no unauthorized access to the second and third floor. Mr. Nucci said that they will have key cards or something similar. Keith Creehan, Spencer's Corner owner of multiple units explained that the property is now a condominium but will be taken over by a partnership. Ms. Morrison asked a question about financing in which Attorney Cassella answered.

Dianne Hunt-Mason spoke as a renter at Spencer's Corner with her own private practice. She has concerns of moving to the first floor being that she is authorized to prescribe medicine and is afraid that being on the first floor will make her more susceptible for danger.

Tony Morrison, town resident asked what the demographic of the residents would be and how many of them would be existing Essex residents. Ms. Ashe and Attorney Cassella could not give out specific information. Mr. Morrison does not understand why the town feels it needs housing. Mr. Shipman and Mr. Day explained that the town is not meeting the state requirement for affordable housing as of now.

Bill Attridge, Old Saybrook resident and board member of HOPE Partnership spoke in favor of this application.

A resident of Ferry Crossing in Old Saybrook (an affordable housing complex run by HOPE Partnership) spoke of her own experience and how fortunate she is to have found affordable housing there.

Joy Perkett Pastor from the First Baptist Church in Essex spoke in favor of this application.

Greg Cassells, town resident and Board Member of the HOPE Partnership spoke in favor of this application.

Claire Matthews, town resident spoke in favor of this application.

Larry Freundlich, Essex resident and tenant at Spencer's Corner spoke in favor of this project and would be willing to move his practice in order to accommodate for the residential units.

Attorney Cassella explained what the process is for how the applicants are picked and what the point system is that is used during the application process.

MOTION made by Bill Reichenbach to continue this application to the next public hearing on May 21, 2018. Jim Hill seconded the motion. All in favor, **Motion carried, 5-0.**

REGULAR MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Larry Shipman, Chairman called the Regular Meeting to order at 8:44 PM. Seated for the regular meeting were Regular Members Larry Shipman, Russ Smith, Bill Reichenbach and Jim Hill. Alternate Rob Day was seated for Susan Uihlein. Alternate Members Jeffrey Lovelace and Thomas Carroll were also in attendance.

2. **NEW BUSINESS**

Application 18-10 – Jane and Keith Bolles – An application to allow an accessory apartment within a house at 8 Squires Lane.

MOTION made by Russ Smith to approve this application in compliance with sections 120G and 130A of the zoning regulations. Rob Day seconded the motion. All in favor, **Motion carried, 5-0.**

Application 18-9 – HOPE Partnership, Inc. – An application for a Site Plan review to locate a 17-unit multi-family dwelling development, known as “The Lofts at Spencer’s Corner”, at 90 Main Street, Centerbrook.

Continued to the next public hearing on May 21, 2018.

3. **ADJOURNMENT**

The next scheduled meeting is May 21, 2018.

MOTION made by Jim Hill to adjourn the Special Meeting at 8:48 pm. Bill Reichenbach seconded the motion. All in favor, **Motion carried, 5-0.**

Shannon DeLorso,
Zoning Board Clerk